"According to Dove (I. p. 253): 'Instead of an elective or hereditary chiefaincy, the place of command was yielded up to the bully of the tribe.' This statement is confirmed by Backhouse (p. 105), who says: 'The chiefs among these tribes are merely heads of families of extraordinary prowess;' and also by Davies (p. 418), who tells us that, 'Each tribe, or portion of a tribe, is under a chief, who does not appear to be hereditary, but to obtain his rank from his daring in war.' Breton (p. 349) and Dixon (p. 22) both state that each tribe had its own chief or leader; but it is evident that their position can have had but little, if any, dignity or authority attached to it, for La Billardière observes (II. p. 61): that 'during the whole time we spent with them, nothing appeared to indicate that they had any chiefs. Each family... seemed to us to live in perfect independence.' Péron authoritatively remarks (p. 448), that 'the aborigines were without any chiefs, properly so called, without laws, or any form of regular government.' We have, on the other hand, the opinion of Lieut. Jeffreys, who considered the statement that the Tasmanians were without any chiefs to be an erroneous one; and thought they had persons to whom they paid a kind of homage and obedience. He quotes (pp. 130-131), in support of this view, the following incident: 'Some time ago a number of bushrangers took it into their heads to run away with a Government boat; being driven on shore, ... they soon fell in with a number of natives. A person of the name of Howe had the command of the bushrangers; and one of the natives, perceiving by his gestures, and [71] the conduct of

the rest of the men, that Howe maintained a sort of authority over his fellows, stepped forward a little from his companions, and showed a disposition to have some personal intercourse with him, refusing at the same time to hold any conversation with the others ...Howe ordered his men to go and drag the boat up.... The native, seeing this, beckoned to his men also to go and assist Howe's men, ... but held Howe himself by the collar, intimating that they should neither of them suffer their dignity to be lessoned by themselves rendering the men any assistance in so servile a piece of labour. This anecdote sufficiently proves that the native tribes of Van Diemen's Land do, in fact, observe a degree of obedience to those whom they consider to be their chiefs or heads.'"

"West observes (p. 81) that their chief were merely heads of families, ... and were thought to possess very trifling and uncertain control. He adds: 'Little is known of their policy, and probably there was but little to be known:' while Robinson, the special friend of the aborigines, was only 'of the opinion that they were divided into various tribes under chiefs occupying particular districts' (Colonies and Slaves, p. 10); but he has left us no further definite information as to the amount of authority and influence possessed by these leaders. This, apparently probable, entire absence of any form of government among the Tasmanian tribes increased the difficulties attending upon the establishment of friendly relations between them and the English, to no inconsiderable degree; thus in the Minutes of the Executive Council, p. 11, we find it stated that, 'The independence of the several tribes one of another would make a separate communication with each necessary.... And, after all, ... so totally do they appear to be without government amongst themselves, that the Council much doubt if any reliance could be placed upon any negotiation which might be entered into with those who appear to be their chiefs, or with any tribe collectively.' And again, on p. 64, this same difficulty is referred to in similar terms, making it evident that these so-called 'chiefs' possessed but the minimum amount of recognized authority among the tribes to which they belonged."

"'Each tribe of the aborigines is divided into several families, and each family, consisting of a few individuals, occupies its own fire' (Backhouse, p. 104). Lloyd (p. 137) says also: 'Wherever a tribe of aborigines locate themselves, each family kindles its separate fire at fourteen to twenty yards apart.' 'They never kindle large fires, lest their haunts might be tracked, but choose retired situations, and generally where food and water are easily attainable' (Van Diemen's Land Annual, 1834, p. 78). 'Their encampments were always formed on the margin of a stream or lagoon. To be within reach of a natural reservoir was of prime importance to a people who had no means of digging wells, or of carrying about with them, for any considerable distance, a stock of water' (Dove, I. p. 250)."